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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Letter dated 24 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Baku Declaration of the seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, held from 25 to 27 April 2016, in Baku.

I would be highly appreciative if you could kindly circulate the present letter and the annex thereto* as a document of the thirty-second session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 4.

(Signed) Vaqif Sadiqov

Ambassador, Permanent Representative

* Circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

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Annex to the letter dated 24 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

The seventh global forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations living together in inclusive societies: a challenge and a goal, 25-27 April 2016, Baku, Azerbaijan

We, the Heads of State and Government and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of States belonging to the Group of Friends of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC);

Together with the Director Generals and other Heads of Delegation of international organizations also belonging to the Group of Friends of UNAOC;

On the occasion of the Seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, 25-27 April 2016, which included a Youth Event as well as networking sessions organized by UNAOC partners;

Reaffirming our commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Also reaffirming our commitment to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as other relevant international instruments such as the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity;

Acknowledging the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/64/14 of 10 November 2009 and A/RES/69/312 of 6 July 2015, adopted by consensus, which recognize and welcome the efforts of UNAOC, express support for its practical projects, and provide UNAOC with the political guidance necessary to pursue its work in promoting intercultural dialogue, understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs, and acknowledging further the guiding principles of the Alliance outlined in the report of the High-Level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations of 13 November 2006;

Stressing the importance of respect and understanding for cultural and religious diversity, of moderation as a value within societies; and encouraging tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and peoples to expand their activities promoting a culture of peace, and to ensure that peace and non-violence are fostered at the national, subregional, regional and international levels;

Encouraging UNAOC to continue to promote moderation as a universal value for attainment of peace, security and development;

Convinced that the world's cultural diversity, as well as cultural heritage, is a wealth to be cherished and sustained by all as a factor of peace and development among all nations;

Expressing concern about the increasing frequency and scale of acts of unlawful destruction of cultural heritage; and stressing the importance of respecting and safeguarding cultural heritage in order to promote peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development;

Recognizing the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation in order to promote tolerance, pluralism and mutual respect and expressing its support for the diverse initiatives taken by governments, international organizations and civil society in this regard;

Welcoming the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognizing the importance of its goals and targets, including, inter alia, on promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, for sustainable development;

Acknowledging the importance of the role of the Marrakesh Declaration adopted in January 2016, on religious minorities in predominantly Muslim majority countries;

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/22 of 4 November 1998, which declared 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and expressed its firm determination to facilitate and promote dialogue among civilizations;

Alarmed by the acts of intolerance, violent extremism, violence, including sectarian violence, and terrorism in various parts of the world, which claim innocent lives, cause destruction and displace people, and rejecting the use of violence, regardless of any motivation;

Reaffirming the commitment made by all Member States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction, and reaffirming also that Member States are under the obligation to protect and respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons;

Recognizing UNAOC's important role in addressing the increasing distrust and polarization between and among communities caused by the fear of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism;

Recognizing also UNAOC's relevant role in raising awareness of the importance of addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, while respecting their human rights, safety and cultural diversity;

Recognizing also in this regard the value added by such UNAOC initiatives as the UNAOC Fellowship Program, Entrepreneurs for Social Change (E4SC), Intercultural Leaders, the Intercultural Innovation Award, PLURAL+, Media and Information Literacy, PEACEapp, UNAOC Summer School, the Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF), and the UNAOC Hate Speech Initiative;

Welcoming the initiative of the Secretary-General on preventing violent extremism and taking note in this regard of his Plan of Action aimed at addressing the drivers of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism; and encouraging the UNAOC's contribution through relevant activities in the areas of media, migration, education, and youth in collaboration with other United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations and civil society;

Noting the important role that youth can play in preventing violent extremism– violent extremism that can be conducive to terrorism– and the need to promote youth's participation and empowerment to that end;

Emphasizing our common determination to combat the scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including incitement to violence based on hatred, in all their forms and manifestations for the goal of living together in inclusive societies;

Reaffirming that the dialogue among civilizations can play an important role in the promotion of common grounds among civilizations, recognition and promotion of the inherent dignity and of the equal rights of all human beings and, in this way, it can assist in dispelling notions of cultural superiority, and facilitate the building of a reconciled world for the human family;

Stressing the importance of creating synergy among the Istanbul Process, Rabat Plan of Action, Fez Action Plan, and taking into consideration the Marrakesh Declaration in this regard;

Reaffirming that there is no justification for violent extremism, whatever the motivation, and that, violent extremism, in all its forms and manifestations cannot and should not be associated with any religion, race, nationality, civilization or ethnic group;

Taking into account that a culture of peace actively fosters non-violence and respect for human rights and strengthens solidarity among peoples and nations and dialogue between cultures;

Recognizing in each culture a dignity and value that deserve recognition, respect and preservation, convinced that, in their rich variety and diversity and in the reciprocal influences that they exert on one another, all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all humankind;

Recognizing further that the process of globalization constitutes a powerful and dynamic force which should benefit the development and prosperity of all countries, without exclusion; noting that while globalization offers great opportunities, its benefits can be very unevenly shared, and its costs unevenly distributed; expressing our determination to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of globalization; noting that these effects could aggravate, inter alia, poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, cultural homogenization and economic disparities; further expressing our determination to maximize the benefits of globalization through, inter alia, the strengthening and enhancement of international cooperation to increase opportunities for trade, economic growth and sustainable development, global communications through the use of new technologies and increased intercultural exchange through the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, which can contribute to the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

Emphasizing the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as women's full, equal and effective participation in decision-making processes, for the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, sustainable development and peaceful and inclusive societies;

Acknowledging that tourism can enhance mutual respect, understanding and tolerance among nations by creating links between visitors and host communities that promote intercultural understanding, fight stereotypes, and contribute to a culture of peace;

Recognizing that information and communications technologies are fundamentally altering the way individuals and communities interact, consume and spend their time, with new and unforeseen health and social consequences, many of which are positive and some of which raise concerns;

Appreciating the leadership and contributions of the members of the Group of Friends;

Expressing appreciation to previous host countries of UNAOC Global Forums: to Spain for The First Global Forum, (Madrid, January 2008); to Turkey, for the Second Global Forum, (Istanbul, April 2009); to Brazil for the Third Global Forum, (Rio, May 2010); to Qatar for the Fourth Global Forum, (Doha, December 2011); to Austria for the

Fifth Global Forum, (Vienna, February 2013), and to Indonesia for the Sixth Global Forum, (Bali, August 2014);

Reaffirming our support for UNAOC and its High Representative;

Welcoming the continuing efforts made by the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to strengthen the relationships between UNAOC and United Nations agencies, departments and other bodies;

Recognizing the role of UNESCO in intercultural dialogue and its contribution to interreligious dialogue, as well as its activities relating to the culture of peace and non-violence and its focus on concrete actions at the global, regional and subregional levels;

Acknowledging initiatives that seek to enable, empower and encourage dialogue among followers of different religions and cultures around the world, such as the Alliance of Civilizations Institute in Istanbul, Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Vienna, the Istanbul Process on the implementation of HRC Resolution 16/18, Baku process, including the World Forum on Inter-Cultural Dialogue held in Baku 2011, 2013 and 2015 under

UNGA Resolution 62/90, the Rabat Plan of Action elaborated under the auspices of the OHCHR, as well as the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures in Alexandria, the World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan, the South East Europe Forum of the Dialogue among Civilizations and the World Conference on Inter-Faith and Inter-Civilization Dialogue in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and other related initiatives and activities;

Acknowledging the efforts made by the High Representative to focus the Alliance's mission and actions to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, seen in the many sessions at this Forum that focus on these critical tasks;

Acknowledging the importance of leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as a way to counter marginalization;

Expressing appreciation to the regional and sub-regional organizations, which are members of the Group of Friends of UNAOC, and are carrying out activities in line with the objectives of UNAOC in regard to its four pillars;

Praising Azerbaijan, as the host country of the 7th Global Forum of the Alliance, for focusing the Baku Forum on the theme "Living Together In Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal," as a way to harness the multiple perspectives of various sectors to meet the challenge of, and progress towards, inclusive living in today's increasingly diverse societies, and taking note of national initiatives in this regard, including the declaration of 2016 as the Year of Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan;

1. Welcome the new members of the Group of Friends of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations;

2. Acknowledge with gratitude the significance of the continued financial commitments made by the Group of Friends, as well as other forms of support, stress the ongoing need for the timely and regular replenishment of the UNAOC Voluntary Trust Fund, and encourage the members of Group of Friends to consider making longer term pledges to ensure predictability of funds;

3. Acknowledge the leadership and contributions of Spain and Turkey as the Co-Sponsors of the Alliance of Civilizations.

4. Recognize the importance of strengthening the UNAOC's four pillars, namely, Youth, Education, Media, and Migration to prevent violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism;

5. Welcome the adoption by consensus of resolution 70/109 of the United Nations General Assembly on "A World against Violence and Violent Extremism" (short for WAVE), which, inter alia, urges all Member States to unite against violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations as well as sectarian violence; and underlines that States, regional and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in promoting tolerance and respect for religious and cultural diversity;

6. Reaffirm its political commitment to the four pillars of activity of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, mainly, youth, education, media and migration, acknowledges the work done in those areas, emphasizes its constructive role in promoting the values of conflict prevention, mediation and reconciliation, and encourages the Alliance to continue its work through a number of projects, in collaboration with governments, international organizations, foundations and civil society groups, as well as media;

7. Commend the High Representative's efforts to incorporate arts, entertainment and sports programming as human expressions of intercultural bridge-building;

8. Commend the international initiatives, including those by UNESCO, designed to promote the safeguarding of cultural heritage in time of peace and in the event of armed conflicts, and encourage the members of the Group of Friends to condemn the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage;

9. Underline the positive impact that migration can have on countries of origin and destination, including through promoting cultural pluralism;

10. Encourage governments, international organizations and all other relevant stakeholders to consider tourism's contribution to the promotion of peace;

11. Recognize that respect for the cultural diversity and cultural rights of all enhances cultural pluralism, contributing to a wider exchange of knowledge and understanding of cultural background, advancing the application and enjoyment of human rights throughout the world, and fostering stable, friendly relations among peoples and nations worldwide;

12. Affirm, in the context of a world which increasingly receives its information from the Internet and where the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, the important place of online media and the Internet as a key element of UNAOC activities to build bridges and counter polarization;

13. Express deep concern about the use of new information technologies, such as the Internet, for purposes contrary to respect for human values, equality, non discrimination, respect for others and tolerance, including to propagate racism, racial hatred, xenophobia, racial discrimination and related intolerance, and that, in particular, children and youth having access to this material could be negatively influenced by it;

14. Recall paragraphs 90 and 91 of the Durban Declaration relating to the use of information technologies, freedom of expression and the positive and negative impacts such technologies can have, including with respect to human values, equality, non-discrimination, respect for others, tolerance, including efforts to combat the propagation of racism, racial and religious hatred, xenophobia, racial discrimination and related intolerance;

15. Support the High Representative in his efforts to advance UNAOC programming as an instrument for addressing conditions conducive to the spread of violent

extremism and foster reconciliation, and trust across communities, to forge inclusive societies for sustainable development;

16. Condemn any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audiovisual or electronic media or any other means;

17. Emphasize that freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and stresses the role that these rights can play in the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief;

18. Stress the importance of implementing UNAOC's goals at the national level through the implementation of action plans at country level with the active leadership of governments and participation of civil society;

19. Encourage members of the Group of Friends to continue developing, updating, and implementing national strategies, and further encourage them to strengthen their efforts to collectively develop and implement regional strategies to increase intercultural dialogue and cooperation as has been done in the Mediterranean, South Eastern Europe, the Arab World and Latin America, and acknowledging the opportunity created by the Baku Forum to open new avenues for cooperation in this regard;

20. Welcome the decision of the High Representative to mainstream the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda into UNAOC programming;

21. Underline the usefulness of the UNAOC Global Forums as platforms where international, regional and sub-regional organizations can share experiences and collaborate toward developing and implementing global and regional strategies for intercultural dialogue and cooperation in support of the UNAOC's fulfilment of its objectives;

22. Welcome the Forum's theme, "Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and a Goal", in line with our efforts towards the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals, particularly of Sustainable Development Goal 16, and recognize that inclusive development is one of the main concerns of all civilizations;

23. Take note of the intention of the High Representative to launch an Advisory Council that would include, inter alia, faith leaders, political leaders, thought leaders and corporate sector figures to provide guidance or recommendations to the High Representative;

24. Encourage UNAOC to further engage with religious leaders to provide them with opportunities for interfaith dialogue to promote tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, and reject violence;

25. Recognize the important contribution to the debates, here in Baku, given by youth and welcome their commitment to lead by example through involvement in UNAOC activities related to education, media and migration;

26. Recognize that UNAOC grows stronger through increased programmatic and financial reporting and through consultation with its Group of Friends; and stress the importance of the role of focal points in contributing to and guiding the work of UNAOC, and encourages a more proactive interaction between the Alliance and focal points;

27. Extend our gratitude to the Government and people of Azerbaijan, in particular to the city of Baku, for hosting the Seventh Global Forum, 25-27 April 2016;

28. Call for the implementation of the commitments made in Baku so that Governments, with the support of the civil society, can overcome challenges and move

forward towards the goals of living together in inclusive societies for sustainable development;

29. Express our conviction that the Baku Forum has achieved its main objective of highlighting UNAOC's role as a global platform for sharing best practices for living together in inclusive societies, as well as solutions, in this context, to challenges, such as the spread of violent extremism which could be conducive to terrorism, in order to promote peace, universal human rights and sustainable development.